

Testimony on Redistricting
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Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jeff Guilfoyle and I am president of the Citizens Research Council of Michigan. With me is Brittany Galisdorfer, CRC fellow, and author of our recent work on redistricting. CRC is a nonprofit nonpartisan public affairs research organization dedicated to improving government in Michigan.

Yesterday, we published a report titled *Congressional and Legislative Redistricting Reform* which outlines our recommendations for changes that we believe should be made to Michigan's redistricting process.

Article IV, Sections 2 through 6, of the Michigan Constitution outline a process for legislative redistricting. However, these provisions were invalidated by the Michigan Supreme Court in 1982 because one provision violated the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution and the remaining provisions were not severable from this section.

We believe that the absence of constitutional redistricting language has left Michigan with a process that is fundamentally flawed. Without a constitutional framework, the legislature has a relatively free hand in the redistricting process. Because one legislature cannot bind the next, each time Michigan redistricts, there is uncertainty regarding how the process will proceed. In addition, sanctioning an approach without standards, which we do by not adopting a permanent, constitutional structure, raises questions about the integrity of Michigan's democratic process.

We are recommending that as part of this year's redistricting effort the legislature place language on the 2012 ballot that would codify a redistricting process in the Michigan Constitution. We recommend that this Constitutional language do the following:

- Recreate a redistricting commission
- Limit redistricting to once per decade
- Describe the appropriate redistricting procedures and timeline
- Increase transparency and public engagement
- Protect electors rights to challenge redistricting plans
- Minimize population variance among districts
- Ensure contiguous single member districts
- Create district boundaries that adhere to political boundaries to the greatest extent possible, and
- Protect communities of interest.

We recommend the recreation of the redistricting commission, both because we feel it is a best practice, and because of its inclusion in Michigan's 1963 Constitution, meaning it was the process that elected delegates to Michigan's Constitutional Convention felt would be most appropriate for Michigan.

Adding these provisions to the Michigan Constitution will help to minimize bias and increase transparency in the redistricting process. Valid and binding constitutional language will help to ensure the integrity of the redistricting process.

We have provided you with copies of our report, which provides additional detail on these recommendations. Thank you for allowing us to testify today.